Legislative and Information Service

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INTERNATIONAL LABOR DEFENSE

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HOUSE UNLIKELY TO RECESS; SENATE MAY

It appears now that the informal two-week recess planned by the House of Representatives may not go through, because of complications involving tax legislation. It does seem likely, however, that the Senate will recess, and a great many Senators will be home for a couple of weeks. Everything in last week's Letter in regard to Senators, therefore, stands. Chances are a good number of Representatives will go home too, at least for a week or so, vacation or no vacation.

Forty-Five To Go On Poll-Tax Petition

Latest reports from Washington are that 173 signatures have been affixed to House Discharge Petition Three, to bring H. R. 7, the Anti-Poll Tax Bill of 1943, to the floor of the House for a vote. That makes forty-five more to go. Last year the real tough going started at the 190-signature mark. After that two signatures had to be obtained for every one of the twenty-eight remaining because every time another Congressman signed, one of the others took his name off--under pressure from the poll-tax forces.

What has to be understood very clearly is that all the lobbying in Washington, all the combining and maneuvering to get signatures to the discharge petition--won't pass the anti-poll tax bill. It is a possibility that a majority of the members of the House should sign the petition; that the measure should come to the floor for a vote, and that it should there be defeated.

That is what may happen unless a very great pressure is exerted in a continuous manner, from the people back home. A Congressman may sign the petition, and then seeing that the people of his constituency are not very excited about it--or at least are not putting much pressure on him--may decide that when it comes to the vote he has more to gain by absenting himself to please a poll-taxer head of a House Committee, than by being present and voting for H. R. 7. This is only one of the reasons why, regardless of lobbying and brain-trusting in Washington, the campaign for H. R. 7, must be developed in each constituency, and kept going until H. R. 7, becomes law.

Anti-Lynch Bill Discharge Petition

No reports are available as to the number of signatures which have been put on House Discharge Petition Five, to bring the Gavagan Anti-Lynch Bill to the floor of the House for a vote. Indications are it has not even progressed as rapidly as the petition on the Anti-Poll Tax Bill. The signature of YOUR OWN CONGRESSMAN is probably not on it. Now is the time to tell him about it.

HOBBS BILL FIGHT MOVES INTO SENATE

By a vote of 270 to 107, the House of Representatives last week passed the anti-labor Hobbs bill, H. R. 653.

The entire debate and vote was confused by several proposed amendments, none of which changed the anti-labor character of the bill, but which were so presented. The result was confusion among labor groups, some of which stopped fighting the bill to fight for the amendments. Out of that confusion came House passage.

It is to be hoped that there will be more clarity, and a more unified opposition, in the fight to prevent the bill from passing the Senate.

Wire your own two Senators today, urging defeat of H. R. 653, the Hobbs ~~Anti-Labor Bill.~~

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Fish Moves to Nullify Anti-Sedition Law

Latest move on behalf of the 34 indicted seditionists comes from Congressman Hamilton Fish, undoubtedly with the support of those who backed him in his fight against passage of the War Security Act (see last week's Legislative Letter). Fish's action is introduction of a bill, H. R. 2352, to nullify the sedition act under which the 34 were indicted. He does it by

FOR VICTORY BUY UNITED STATES WAR BONDS AND STAMPS

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re-writing the act so that it cannot conceivably be enforced. A few of the sleight of hand accomplishments of H. R. 2352 are:

Prosecution is limited to persons who accomplish their purpose of impairing the loyalty, morale, and discipline of the armed forces by personal contact. This would exclude publishers of seditious literature distributed to the armed forces unless they made a personal contact with individual members. They could distribute all they pleased by any other method. Only actual personal distributors would be liable.

The whole theory of prosecution for conspiracy is nullified. Each individual member of a conspiracy under this act would have to be proved to have personally performed an act which is in itself criminal. To illustrate: if this principle were applied in prosecution for counterfeiting, the member of the conspiracy who buys the ink (in itself not a criminal act) could not be prosecuted for this share.

Under the Fish Bill, a seditionist or group of seditionists could not be indicted unlessthe sedition were successful! In this provision also the theory of prosecution for conspiracy is nullified.

The highest sentence for the highest crime in war-time, under the Fish Bill, would be a year in jail and $500 fine.

There are a dozen other ways in which the Fish Bill would nullify the possibility of successful prosecutions for sedition and seditious conspiracy in war time. Those noted are enough to give you an idea.

The Fish Bill is indicative of the lengths to which isolationists and poll-taxers in Congress will go to protect the enemy in our midst. The follow-up is perfect, after the spectacle these gentlemen made of themselves in connection with the War Security Act.

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And On The Other Hand -- We have Ham Fish's closest collaborator, Martin Dies of un-American fame, introducing new legislation which will be supported by Mr. Fish, because it's right up his alley. Be it remembered: that Attorney General Biddle in his decision on the Bridges deportation case threw in free for nothing and without reference to the subject on which he was writing, a list of a few organizations, most of them defunct, which he held to be subversive. Later on, an Interdepartmental Committee drew up another list, fantastic in its presentations, which for the most part has been held confidential, but part of which Mr. Dies had inserted in the Congressional Record. It is also easy to recall that Mr. Dies himself has from time to time named practically every CIO union, and many other organizations, as subversive. In this place it is scarcely necessary to repeat again the basis (if any) of Mr. Dies' findings.

Mr. Dies' H. R. 2447 provides that any person who belongs to or in any way supports any of these organizations shall be ineligible for employment by the Government in any capacity. Apparently Mr. Dies considers himself a permanent department, because the bill writes his committee into law, and makes its findings a matter of law.

Mr. Dies' second bill, H. R. 2446 would cancel the citizenship of any person (that means native-born as well as naturalized) who joins "any organization subject to foreign control and engaged in political activity"-- presumably again by a Dies definition. (This is exactly the same Mr. Dies who was so worried about the "civil liberties" of saboteurs that he fought a bill to punish their activities in war-time.)

H. R. 2447 is before the Committee on the Civil Service (Congressman Robert (poll-tax) Ramspeck, chairman); H. R. 2446 is before the Judiciary Committee (Congressman Hatton W. (poll-tax) Sumners, chairman), Dies has announced he will press for early hearings and reports to get the bills out for a vote.

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"Grade Labelling" Investigation The paratroopers got in another lick behind our lines last week, when the House of Representatives passed House Resolution 98, and thereby set up a committeeto "investigate" the Office of Price Administration and the War Production Board. This potent weapon against the war was sponsored, and therefore will

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